

## Rep. Bilirakis Condemns Gaza Rocket Attacks

WASHINGTON (5 Mar.) — On Wednesday, U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia, managed debate on the House floor for H. Res. 951, Condemning the ongoing Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli civilians by Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations.

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[Full Text of H.Res. 951](#)

The resolution, introduced by Rep. Garrett (R-NJ), was cosponsored by 295 members of the House, including Rep. Bilirakis, passed the House today by a near unanimous vote of 404 yeas to 1 nay (Roll no. 93).

H. Res. 951 strongly condemns the ongoing Iranian-enabled rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and places responsibility for launching the attacks on Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza. The resolution also supports the government of Israel's right to defend its territory; it recognizes the difficult balance Israel faces in being the primary supplier of numerous necessities for the Palestinian people, even while working to defend against the rocket attacks; and supports Palestinian civilians that reject Hamas and terrorism, while reaffirming the friendship between the governments of Israel and the United States.

Below is the prepared text of Rep. Bilirakis's remarks during floor debate on H. Res. 951:

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Prepared Floor Remarks for  
The Honorable Gus M. Bilirakis

H. Res. 951 (Rep. Scott Garrett, R-NJ), Condemning the ongoing Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli civilians, and for other purposes.

March 5, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 951, which does not merely condemn the ongoing Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli civilians—but it also clearly articulates that the United States stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of Israel in their time of need.

Since the inception of the Palestinians' latest war against Israel started in September 2000, Palestinian suicide bombers have struck at crowded buses, hotels, cafes and other civilian targets, shedding innocent blood in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and other communities.

Additionally, during the war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, Hezbollah rockets rained down on Israeli civilian populations, claiming dozens of innocent lives.

And then, Mr. Speaker, there is Sderot and other Israeli communities bordering Gaza, where, everyday, ordinary people must cope with the fear that a rocket could fall at any moment, killing or maiming them and their loved ones.

Last month, as the international press covered a Palestinian demonstration against Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian jihadist groups launched rockets that struck Sderot and elsewhere.

The scene was terrifying.

A father of four died of shrapnel wounds after a rocket struck his car.

A 10-year-old boy, Yossi Haimov, lay severely injured after being struck in a supermarket as his 8-year-old sister Maria tried to comfort him.

While these were among the few instances that the suffering of Israelis in the border communities was broadcast internationally, the trauma endured by innocent Israeli civilians in such attacks has been ongoing and extensive.

The psychological impact from continued rocket attacks has affected all segments of the population.

However, their brutal impact has been most vivid on Sderot's children.

Reports indicate that almost one-third of those between the ages of four and 18, now suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, while many more exhibit the symptoms of severe anxiety and feelings of helplessness that warn of more serious problems to come.

And Mr. Speaker, the rockets continue to fall.

With the help of Iran and Syria, Hamas and its accomplices are developing, acquiring and firing rockets with longer ranges, more accuracy and more lethality.

Yet, even though Palestinian extremists continue to target innocent men, women and children—in clear violation of international law—the response of other nations, and international bodies such as the United Nations, has often been openly hostile to the Israelis—the very people under attack.

In multiple UN fora, while not a word is uttered about the Hamas rockets falling from the sky, Israel is denounced for inflicting suffering on Gaza when it defends itself against those who attack its citizens, including through an economic blockade—a blockade which does not apply to food, medicine and other vital necessities.

While the European Union, earlier this week, denounced Israel's targeted action against those who launch rockets against the Israeli people, it said next to nothing about the countless Israeli victims of Palestinian violence.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is vital that Congress take a stand against this double standard.

This resolution states that the Palestinian extremists behind the rocket attacks against Israeli civilians are in clear violation of international humanitarian standards, as they not only brutally target civilian populations, but use peace-loving Palestinian civilians as human shields against Israeli self-defense measures.

Furthermore, this resolution calls on the President to:

- Direct the US Permanent Representative to the UN to introduce a resolution at the UN Security Council condemning Palestinian rocket and other attacks against innocent Israeli civilians; and

- Direct the Secretary of State to raise this issue in all applicable bilateral and international fora.

Finally, this resolution sends a message to the very people under daily attack by these rockets — our Israeli friends and allies — that the Congress of the United States stands firmly behind them in their struggle against Palestinian extremists.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to support this critical resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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